What you need to bear in mind before your **first volunteering** trip

While you're choosing

- Make a list of the causes you want to get involved in. This will help you narrow down your search
- Research the chosen organisation's online presence. Familiarise yourself with the projects they've carried out and how they work

Once you've chosen a project

- Make sure you apply for all the necessary documents and permits. These include a valid passport, any contracts or agreements you need to sign, medical and/or personal liability insurance, visas and residence permits for the country and booking your accommodation if they don't provide it...
- Draw up a breakdown of expenses for the duration of your international volunteering placement
- Find out about the local culture and language. Learn some key phrases so you can communicate
- Check whether you need any vaccinations and book an appointment to have them in good time

A few days before your trip

- Pack clothes suitable for the work you'll be doing, especially if it involves physical labour. Opt for comfortable, protective clothing that will allow you to take part in activities with ease
- Make sure you have your passport and all the necessary documents with you
- Also take something that helps you reconnect with home and feel at home. You'll be away for several weeks and to look after others you need to look after yourself too
- Keep a diary of your experience. It will help you reflect on everything you've learnt and the impact your efforts are having
- Check the weather for the time of year you'll be in the country
- Check the public transport links in the area where you'll be staying
- Familiarise yourself with the social norms and customs of the area so that you can settle in quickly and easily

